

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART today released sketches of its new facade on West 53rd Street and announced that the two new additions to the east, now under construction, the enlarged garden and the remodeled main building will open to the public in May, 1964 at the time of the New York World's Fair. Philip Johnson Associates are the architects.

At the same time, the Museum announced that extensive improvements in the lobby facilities and relocation of the entrance will compel it to close the galleries, auditorium and restaurants for about five months beginning December 1. Many services, however, including the Art Lending Service, the Museum school, bookstore and all offices will remain open throughout the entire building and remodeling period. Museum members will be offered a choice of extra privileges to compensate for the time the galleries are closed.

In addition to continuing the regular program of circulating about 60 specially prepared exhibitions to other museums here and abroad during the 63-64 season, the Museum will also make unprecedented loans from its own collection to a few major museums in large cities in this country and Canada while the galleries are closed.

Among the improved lobby facilities planned to accommodate the increasing number of visitors and members are an enlarged bookstore, an information center, waiting lounge and new elevator system. The new lobby will also provide direct access to the new exhibition galleries on the ground floor which will be used for temporary changing exhibitions.

The second phase of the building program, incorporating the Museum's structures west of the main building (21-27) and the Whitney Museum of American Art, which is selling its building on 54 Street to the Museum of Modern Art in order to build elsewhere, will start after the first phase is completed.

The new galleries opening next spring will almost double the exhibition space the Museum now has and will provide greatly increased facilities for library, archives and research. The expansion is made possible by the successful fund raising drive for \$25,000,000 for building, endowment and program, launched in the fall of 1959. Seven million dollars has been allotted to the construction program.

To inaugurate the new galleries and enlarged sculpture garden, the Museum will present in the spring of 1964 the first comprehensive showing of its own collections, the fountainhead of its entire program.

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"This unrivaled review of the movements and masters, both European and American, whose achievements have made the years since 1880 the most multiform and challenging in the history of art, will be a dramatic revelation of the Museum's hitherto hidden resources," William A. M. Burden, President of the Museum, said in a letter to the Museum's 33,000 members announcing future plans.

"To initiate the continuous showing of our collections on a scale commensurate with the vitality and variety of 20th century art seems particularly appropriate at the present time, when our own American art has made such an unprecedented impact here and abroad. It will be, moreover, a provocative introduction to the new activities made possible by our expansion."

The opening of the new galleries will mark the sixth expansion of the Museum since it opened in 1929 with five "gallery rooms" in an office building at 730 Fifth Avenue, where 186,311 admissions were tallied in the first 10 months. In 1932 the Museum moved to a converted town house at 11 West 53rd Street. Five years later temporary quarters in the Time-Life Building were taken while the town house was replaced by the present main building which opened in 1939. In 1945 space was rented on Fifth Avenue for the War Veterans Art Center, later to become the Museum school known as the People's Art Center. In 1951 an annex to the main building at 21 West 53rd Street opened. Two floors were turned over to the People's Art Center, the rest used for painting storage and offices.

In 1956 the Museum acquired the Theater Guild Building at 23 West 53rd Street for additional office space. Throughout the years more and more storage and shipping space was rented in various warehouses around the city. By the 60's, Santini's Warehouse in the West 40's, rather than the Museum, was headquarters for the assembling and shipping of exhibitions sent by the department of circulating exhibitions to other museums in this country and abroad.

Meanwhile, Museum attendance has increased steadily, reaching a new high of 729,000 last year, while membership reached 33,000. From 1939 to the present, the number of items in the collections increased from 2,600 to almost 20,000.

The new Garden Wing, being constructed at the eastern end of the sculpture garden, will provide a large exhibition hall as well as classrooms. A terrace on its roof will become an extension of the sculpture garden to which it will be connected by an open-air staircase. The new 53rd Street galleries will also overlook the garden, which will become, by the time the entire building program is completed, the center around which the complex of Museum services and facilities are grouped.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director of Public Information, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.